

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCES BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF
LABOUR AND THE WAR COMMITTEE, JANUARY, 1918.

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WEDNESDAY, April 3, 1918.

At the invitation of the War Committee of the Cabinet, representatives of organized labour were called together at Ottawa on January 16, 1918, for a discussion of matters of interest to the Government and labour.

The following were present as representatives of the several organizations indicated:—

Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, Executive, J. C. Watters, P. M. Draper, Jas. Simpson and Fred Bancroft.

United Association Plumbers and Pipe Fitters, John W. Bruce.

International Association Machinists, John A. McClelland, Harry Harper.

United Brotherhood Carpenters and Joiners, Tom Moore, Narcisse Arcand.

Boot and Shoe Workers' International Union, E. W. A. O'Dell.

United Garment Workers, F. W. Bush.

Amalgamated Association Sheet Metal Workers, John H. Kennedy.

International Brotherhood Electrical Workers, A. Bastien.

Hotel and Restaurant Employees, A. O'Leary.

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, C. Lawrence.

Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, W. Best.

Order of Railway Conductors of America, L. L. Pelletier.

Order of Railroad Telegraphers, J. C. Rooney.

Railway Carmen, Thos. Broad.

International Brotherhood of Papermakers, J. Lockwood.

International Brotherhood of Brewery Workers, J. Ralph.

Theatrical Stage Employees, Wm. Lodge.

Canadian Railway Employees, L. Swan.

Amalgamated Society of Engineers, J. H. Ballantyne.

Montreal Trades Council, J. T. Foster, Jos. Ainey.

Quebec Trades Council, W. Walsh.

Hamilton Trades Council and Ontario Independent Labour Party, W. R. Rollo.

Toronto Trades Council, Walter Brown, T. A. Stevenson.

At this meeting, on January 16, 1918, statements were presented by the Government dealing with the general war situation, particularly as it affected labour, and after consideration by the delegates they presented certain recommendations to the Government, whereupon it was arranged that the conferences should be adjourned to permit of fuller representation of delegates from all the provinces of Canada.

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This adjourned conference was held on January 29, 1918, and the following were present:—

Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, J. C. Watters, president; P. M. Draper, secretary; Jas. Simpson, Arthur Martel, R. A. Rigg, Fred Bancroft.

United Association Plumbers and Steamfitters of the United States and Canada, John W. Bruce, general organizer.

International Association of Machinists, J. A. McClelland, vice-president; Harry Harper, general organizer.

United Brotherhoods of Carpenters and Joiners of America, T. Moore, Narcisse Arcand, general organizer.

Boot and Shoe Worker's Union, E. W. A. O'Dell, general organizer.

United Garment Workers of America, F. W. Bush, executive board member.

Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers of America, J. H. Kennedy, general organizer.

International Brotherhood Electrical Workers of America, A. Bastien, vice-president.

Hotel and Restaurant Employees Incorporated Alliance, Arthur O'Leary, executive board member.

International Brotherhood of Papermakers, Jas. J. Lockwood, executive board member.

Brewery and Soft Drink Workers International Union, Jas. J. Ralph, executive board member.

International Alliance Theatrical Stage Employees, W. Lodge, Chas. O'Donnel, John Kester.

American Federation of Musicians, Ed. Jarout, president, Toronto Union.

Amalgamated Society of Engineers, E. Ballantyne.

International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, Napoleon Gauthier, general organizer; J. L. Rousseau, business agent, Thetford Mines, Que.

Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees of America, Jas. Bibbons, business agent, Toronto Div.; Controller W. D. Robbins, secretary, Toronto Div.

Moving Picture Operators, William Covert, organizer, Toronto.

American Federation of Labour, John A. Fleet, Hamilton, Ont.

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, C. Lawrence, Canadian legislative representative.

Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginmen, W. L. Best, Canadian legislative representative.

Order of Railway Conductors of America, L. L. Pelletier, Canadian legislative representative.

Order of Railroad Telegraphers, J. C. Rooney, J. M. Mein, Western Division.

Brotherhood Railway Carmen of America, Thomas Broad.

Canadian Brotherhood Railroad Employees, A. R. Mosher, grand president; T. Swan, F. H. Lawrence, vice-president, C.G.B., Western Division.

Canadian Pacific Railway System Federation of Shop Men, Frank McKenna, travelling representative.

Grand Trunk Railway Legislative Board, W. G. Dewar, D. Baker.

International Brotherhood Maintenance of Way Employees, A. E. Barker, Detroit, president; A. McGovern.

Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, A. McGovern, vice-president.

International Brotherhood Boilermakers and Iron Ship Builders, J. P. Merrigan, vice-president.

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Amalgamated Mine Workers, J. B. MacLachlan, Silby Barrett.

New Brunswick Federation of Labour, Jas. L. Sugrue, president.

Alberta Federation of Labour, J. A. Kinney, president; Alex. Ross, M.P., vice-president.

British Columbia Federation of Labour, Victor R. Midgley, president.

Saskatchewan Executive Committee, Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, R. H. Chadwick, vice-president.

Montreal Trades and Labour Council, J. T. Foster, president; Con. Jos. Ainey.

Quebec Trades and Labour Council, M. Walsh, president.

Hamilton Trades and Labour Council, W. R. Rollo, secretary.

Toronto District Labour Council, T. A. Stevenson, Walter Brown, president.

Halifax Trades and Labour Council, R. H. Eisnor, president.

At this adjourned conference the Government submitted the following memorandum relating to the proposed National Registration:—

To give effect to the declared policy of the Government to mobilize the man-power and resources of Canada for the vigorous prosecution of the war in all its phases, the Government believes that an inventory of the man-power and woman-power of Canada should be taken, the inventory to include all those of sixteen years of age and upwards. This inventory and mobilization is required in order that Canada may more fully co-ordinate and concentrate her war efforts to meet both the urgency of the present military situation, and the imperative needs of greater food production and conservation, increased labour and production in essential industries and other pressing problems which face the nation. Among the specific purposes sought to be accomplished by the inventory are:—

1. To ascertain the numbers, residence, nationality and occupation of all persons who have evaded registration under the provisions of the Military Service Act.

2. To facilitate the operation of the Military Service Act by requiring that all registered shall carry a certificate of registration.

3. To ascertain the numbers, residence and present occupation of those, who, though not now engaged in agriculture, have had experience in farming, and are qualified to assist in agricultural production.

4. To ascertain the numbers employed in various occupations or lines of industry, so as to ascertain the labour supply which might be rendered available by closing or curtailing less essential industries and diverting labour to more essential industries.

5. To ascertain the supply of woman labour available to supplement the work of men, or to take over the work of men who could thereby be released for other service of national importance.

6. To ascertain the numbers, residence, nationality and occupation of all persons resident in Canada who are not British subjects by birth or naturalization.

7. To be able to utilize with the least inconvenience, and to the best advantage the service of all men and women in the employment to which they are fitted by special training and experience.

8. To secure all such information as will enable the Government, in co-operation with labour, to carry on an effective and organized Dominion-wide propaganda and appeal to secure by voluntary enlistment of labour the men and women necessary for all such industries and occupations as are essential to the successful prosecution of the war, and to assist in securing an equitable distribution of labour for such purposes.

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9. To secure the information which will be required in case the state, at a future date, should be compelled to arrange for more equitable distribution of fuel, food, or other necessities of life.

The labour delegates, after consideration, presented their reports to the Government and the position of labour as set forth by their own representatives appears in the following memorandum:—

TO ORGANIZED LABOUR IN CANADA.

This pamphlet is issued for the information of your organization, outlining the results of conferences called by the Government and held between them and representatives of organized labour of Canada.

The Government of this country having realized that no measures can be successful without the co-operation of the workers, and also that to obtain that expression of true co-operation, it must recognize the organizations of the workers as the only tangible means of expression. The methods of conference of all other allied countries in dealing direct with organized labour representatives may have some bearing on their changed attitude, or it may be other reasons, but we are not concerned for the purpose of this circular as to what has brought about the change. Their attitude is now one of co-operation with the organized labour movement and, by tolerance on both sides, it is hoped that such co-operation will expand to its fullest degree.

With this introduction, we submit in very condensed form the final decisions of three joint meetings with the War Cabinet of the Government, occupying over seven hours, at which free interchange of expression took place, and fourteen private meetings of over fifty labour representatives of different trades, from all parts of the Dominion. Although these delegates had no official instructions on any of the matters from their respective organizations, yet their official standing, and years of experience and observation, must be taken into account, and we therefore feel no hesitation in placing these findings before you, as in no way a careless conclusion, but one arrived at in the full expectation that it represents the attitude of the members of organized labour in this country.

The subjects dealt with are tabulated in condensed form as follows, with the additions of such comments as seemed advisable by the conference:

1. The acceptance of any position in the Union Government which would carry with it the necessity of subscribing to the platform of this or any other political government was not deemed advisable, and the conference so informed the Government in reply to their statement that it was their intention to create a position of Under Secretary of Labour, who would of necessity have to be a member of the House of Commons, and accept a Government seat to obtain that position.

It was made plain that this decision did not prevent any member of organized labour from accepting such a position as an individual, but that organized labour as a body could not tie itself to subscribe to any political party.

2. The Government agreed to our representations that on all advisory committees and commissions which would have had to do with the prosecution of the war, or the reconstruction period after the war, and in which labour was affected, that organized labour should be given fair representation.

We further emphasized this at our last meeting with the Government by defining that such representatives, to be satisfactory to organized labour, must be such as are recommended or acceptable to the recognized heads of our movement, or where the boards are of a strictly local character, then acceptable to the local trades council, where such exists, or the organized movement in such district.

3. The Government were pressed to define what were in their opinion essential or non-essential industries for the carrying on of the war, and replied they were not in a position to say, as the question was now under investigation, reasonably claiming that this would necessarily have to be decided according to the developments in the war.

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In order that the least possible hardship may be done to any workers employed in any industry that may in the future be classed as non-essential, the conference asked the Government to arrange time for the organizations affected to place their views before them, before final action was taken.

4. The railroad labour problem had to be dealt with. We submitted three alternative proposals to the Government. First, the nationalization of all railroads, and their operation for the good of the country instead of for private enrichment. The representatives of three of the railroad brotherhoods recorded themselves as opposed to this, on definite instructions from their membership, the chief reason advanced being the bad conditions of employment insisted upon on present government-owned roads, and lack of protection through not applying compensation laws the same as when the roads are under private ownership. The movement as represented by the organizations affiliated with the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada disagrees, claiming that this is purely a matter of administration, and in no way affects the principle. As the three railway organizations are amongst the trades primarily affected, due consideration should be given to their views.

5. An alternative proposal (failing the taking over of the entire railway systems of the country by the Government), is the creation of a central control board to operate the railways during the war, and on which board labour shall be fully and fairly represented.

A third alternative is the compelling of the companies (because of their public endowment in the past), to raise the wages of all necessary labour to a living standard. By one of these methods we are sure that the labour difficulties of the railways may be solved.

On none of the above have the Government committed themselves, simply stating that the subject is so large that they would require a longer time to reach their final conclusions.

6. On suggestion of the Government, the representatives of the agricultural departments of the various Provincial Governments, and also the superintendents of the labour bureaus of these Governments, who were meeting in Ottawa concurrently, submitted to us a memorandum which embodied their suggestions to the Government. Following out the suggestions of the Government, they placed before us their recommendations for our consideration. Our conclusions were as follows, which we later submitted to the Government:

(a) With their proposal for the abolition of private employment bureaus and the addition to and encouragement of provincial and municipal employment agencies, also the creation of a Dominion exchange for the tabulation of statistics and the standardization of such bureaus, we agreed: Subject (1) The control to be regulated by advisory boards, on which labour should have equal representation; (2) the acceptance to be finally judged by the nature of the regulations to be drawn up governing the same for the protection of labour.

(b) Regarding the proposal that reduced railway rates be granted to all labourers travelling on all railways in Canada, to employment away from home, the conference went further than acceptance of this, and suggested to the Government free railway transportation to all labourers going from cities to farms or from farm to farm. As evidence was submitted showing that a large percentage of the aggregate wages received for temporary service on farms was taken to cover transportation charges, preventing many workers assisting in farm production.

(c) We agreed to their proposition of exemption from compulsory military service of all farm help, as this is in line with our previous declaration on this subject.

(d) A proposal from the Provincial Government representatives to introduce a form of compulsory service on the farms was unanimously rejected. The conference

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substituted a proposition of a campaign of publicity, in which the hours, wages, and working conditions which the Government would guarantee for such work would be stated along with accurate information as to actual labour requirements. These conditions to be fixed by local wage boards, on which labour, farmers, and the Provincial Government employment bureaus, would all be fairly represented.

The Government have these suggestions under consideration, and while some of the members of the Government expressed themselves as holding the opinion that any form of conscripted farm labour would be impracticable, no official pronouncement was made on this matter.

We also opposed a suggested amendment to the Criminal Code, to treat as a vagrant any man deliberately unemployed for a period of time. The Government agreed to our objection, as it is impossible to define unemployment and would lead to many abuses.

(e) We also agreed to the use, temporarily, of teen age boys, during summer holidays, etc., and the undertaking of a full publicity campaign for the help required. The proposal to introduce farm help from the United States also received our support, as it would be inconsistent with our international position to do otherwise.

7. On the subject of labour shortage, and the redistribution of same, the conference agreed that some steps were necessary to obtain accurate information as to the number of persons in Canada with experience at various trades or callings. This would serve the purpose of accurately answering by reliable statistics the oft repeated assertion of the labour shortage. There was general agreement among the delegates that up to the present such shortage does not exist. It is simply faulty distribution of the same.

The Government suggestions to obtain compulsory registration of the man and woman-power of this Dominion, and to use the same for the purpose of securing a measure of voluntary enlistment, for essential industries and farming, was accepted, having in view the national necessity and the urgency of the situation as placed before us. Our acceptance, however, was contingent on labour being fully represented on the committees dealing with this question, and the use of such labour being for voluntary industrial service.

8. Alien labour and its exploitation by private interests occupied our attention, and we placed before the Government our protests against any man, alien or otherwise, being allowed to work under private employment, unless he is granted the full industrial freedom of a citizen of Canada. We disagree with the principle of any deduction from his wages under any guise, as it would inevitably lead to the lowering of the present standards of living of Canadian citizens.

Aliens not fit to be at large under the above conditions should be placed at work under Government detention, clearing lands, and producing farm produce on Government owned and operated farms.

9. We drew the attention of the Government to the popular discontent against men of military age of allied nations being left to take the place of our citizens, called up for military service, and in order to establish equality of service, as far as is consistent for the safety of the country, left the Government to take such steps as may be possible with the Governments of the allied nations, to secure such equality.

10. The limitation and prevention of brewing of light beers in this country were objected to. Strong divergent opinions on the temperance question are known to exist in our ranks, and therefore the subject was dealt with on the broad basis as to whether it was really necessary for the continuance and the winning of the war to prohibit such light beers, and not from the point of view as to the merits or demerits of beer as an ordinary beverage.

The conference decided that inasmuch as some men considered it a necessity, and it did not need any food grains to produce, and that it might possibly prevent some

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men from freely changing their place of employment, and that it was an unnecessary interference with the workers, and asked for the reconsideration of the Order in Council dealing with this as a war measure.

11. The introduction of Chinese labour was emphatically opposed, the conference endorsing the stand that we can and must win the war without the destruction of the national standards at home which the introduction of Coolie labour would inevitably lead to, or otherwise victory would be a barren one, so far as democracy is concerned.

12. We called upon the Government for the protection of women who enter industries to replace men, and suggested that they should only be placed there after full investigation had proven that all available man-power had been absorbed. That full inspection of working conditions should be carried out at all times, also reports by women inspectors, in conjunction with representatives of men's organizations, as to the advisability of women undertaking any class of work (with a view of their responsibility towards the nation, as the mothers of our future citizens), should be a contingent condition of their employment in any industry.

13. Equal pay for women employed on work usually done by men, as men are receiving, or were previously receiving, for the same work, will be insisted upon, and the Government asked to make a declaration to that effect, and also to guarantee the right of women to protect themselves through trade unions the same as men.

14. Political equality for women should accompany the industrial use of women, so that through the ballot box the women can express their opinion of the treatment they may receive.

15. A revision by the Government of their land policy was asked, and the expropriation by them of lands held for speculative purposes, and the necessary legislation to enable many to return to the land as owners of small farms, near to shipping points, and thus to assist production.

16. A protest was also lodged against the reported closing of places of amusement, such as theatres, etc., which provide necessary relaxation to workers, and relatives of those overseas, during these depressing times.

17. Another resolution to ask the Government to include the registration of the wealth of the country at the same time as the man power, was presented to the Government.

The Government announced that they had cabled to the Premier of Great Britain, The Right Hon. David Lloyd George, that they were in complete accord with the war aims of the British Government as stated by him, and assured the British Government of the full co-operation of this country to carry the war to a successful conclusion, in accord with his declarations.

The Government were fully informed in our memoranda to them that our expressions of opinion were only to be accepted as the individual opinions of the delegates, and would be in no way binding on the movement as a whole.

All of which is fraternally submitted on behalf of the delegates present at the conference

J. C. WATTERS, *Chairman.*

TOM MOORE, *Secretary.*

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The Government issued the following official statements as to the results of the conferences:—

The most important question considered at the conference between the War Committee of the Cabinet and representatives of organized labour was how to organize the man-power of Canada so as to enable Canada to make her maximum contribution towards the successful prosecution of the war in men, foodstuffs, munitions and ships. Numerous representations had been made to the Government:—

- (1) That men called out under the Military Service Act, but physically unfit, should be conscripted for farm labour.
- (2) That alien labour should be conscripted.
- (3) That coolie labour should be imported for agricultural and other essential industries.
- (4) That less essential industries should be closed.
- (5) That there should be compulsory national registration of the man-power and the woman-power of the country.

On these questions the Government has had the full benefit of consultation of the labour leaders, who have also submitted their recommendations to the Government. The Government has also had the benefit of the recommendations of the representatives of the Department of Agriculture of the several provinces, and, after giving careful consideration to these representations, the Government has reached the following conclusions:—

(1). Through its representatives at the Ottawa conference, Canadian Labour has expressed its unqualified disapproval of any form of conscription for service on the farms. The Government, after careful consideration of those questions from all sides, is unable to accept the view that men called out under the Military Service Act, but physically unfit, should be conscripted for farm labour. The State is undoubtedly entitled to command the services of all its citizens in time of national peril, but the Government recognizes that, in addition to the objections so strongly urged by organized labour against industrial conscription, compulsory service of individual citizens for individual farmers in Canada is impracticable.

With regard to the possible conscription or other utilization of alien labour, the problems involved are so complex and different, especially from the international standpoint, that it has not as yet been possible to reach a definite decision. It is fully expected that a conclusion will be reached within the course of a few days, when the Government will be in possession of further information bearing on the problem.

The representatives of labour directly challenged the necessity for the importation of coolie labour, and stated that there is sufficient labour in Canada, if properly organized, to man all our essential industries. They regard the importation of coolie labour as bound to degrade the industrial, social and moral standards of the people. The Government is anxious to avoid the importation of coolie labour, but if in the future it appears impossible to meet the war needs in Canada without the temporary utilization of such labour in certain essential fields of employment, the matter will receive further consideration by the Government, after consultation with labour.

The Government recognizes that the labour situation could be relieved to some extent by diverting labour from the less essential to the more essential industries, and to this end is taking measures to secure the classification of the industries of Canada. On the War Trade Board, which is dealing with this matter, labour is represented by its own nominees.

If Canadian man-power, in the broadest sense of the term, is to be thoroughly organized so that the best possible results can be achieved for all our war activities, it will be necessary to have made an accurate and complete inventory of the men and

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women of the country. This can only be secured by a system of compulsory registration, applicable to persons over sixteen years of age.

The Government will take immediate steps to secure this registration and inventory, and on any committees appointed to deal with the matter labour will be given fair representation.

It is the intention of the Government to conduct a thoroughly organized propaganda to secure, by voluntary enlistment, the necessary men and women to assist in the campaign for greater food production, as well as to secure the labour required for other essential industries. In the organization and conduct of this campaign the Government will not only invite the co-operation of labour, but on all committees appointed will give labour fair representation.

The Government appreciates the sympathetic spirit manifested by the representatives of labour, and their assurances of hearty support in the efforts that the Government proposes to put forth to meet the present emergency.

While it has not been possible to come to a decision upon many of the details presented in the report of organized labour, the Government feels confident that these will be satisfactorily adjusted by the committees to be created for grappling with the grave labour problems that now confront the nation.

The Government is assured that great advantage to the public interest will result from its recent conferences with the representatives of organized labour in Canada.

In regard to the question of conscripting alien labour, the Government, on February 17, issued the following statement:—

At recent conferences, held in January at Ottawa, and with agricultural representatives of the provincial Governments, and of organized labour, considerable attention was directed to the advisability of measures whereby persons of enemy nationality should be subjected to some form of conscription in order to relieve labour conditions.

The matter was discussed from every standpoint, and the conclusion was reached that it would be inadvisable, and in a very large measure impracticable, to carry into effect any such system of compulsion of labour.

Throughout the conferences it was clearly demonstrated that conscript alien labour could not be utilized on the farms except in cases where the conscripts could work in large numbers under military discipline.

To withdraw any large numbers of labourers from the existing supply of labour for this purpose would not relieve the situation, but rather aggravate it.

The attitude of organized labour was made perfectly clear, namely, unqualified opposition to any proposals for industrial conscription for either aliens or British citizens. They maintained that any attempt to conscript alien enemies with a view to relieving existing labour conditions would but intensify the situation and make more difficult the problem that now confronts the nation. They pointed out that in Great Britain, where the labour problem is much more serious than here, the authorities have refrained from any such action, mainly on account of the international complications that might arise therefrom, and also because of the belief that compulsion for industrial purposes is unwise and undemocratic.

Alien enemies in Canada are of two classes—those who are interned and those who are permitted to remain at large. The former class comprises about two thousand persons, who, for adequate reason, have forfeited their liberty. Those persons are under the terms of the Dominion Order in Council of June 26th, 1915, though civilians, recognized as prisoners of war. According to international usage, civilians interned as prisoners of war are held to be immune from compulsory labour. This has been the policy of both the British and Canadian Governments since the outbreak of the war.

Labour performed by prisoners in Canadian concentration camps is voluntary, and men thus employed receive a moderate remuneration for their work.

The second class of enemy aliens comprises the unnaturalized natives of enemy countries whose conduct justified the Government in according to them the liberty

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enjoyed by ordinary citizens. By a proclamation of the Government, issued on August 15, 1914, such persons receive the assurance that so long as they quietly pursue their ordinary avocations they will enjoy the protection of the law, and will not be molested unless there is reasonable ground to believe they are guilty of hostile acts. In practice and theory this immunity is, of course, purely conditional and may be withdrawn whenever the public interest so requires. But even if this assurance had not been given, it would be impossible to find justification in The Hague Convention, or in general international usage for industrial conscription of such aliens. Moreover, special conscription of enemy aliens might be followed by reprisals in Germany and Austria-Hungary, where the shortage of labour presents a more pressing problem than it does here. Such reprisals would be visited in all probability not only upon Canadians, but indiscriminately upon British citizens from all parts of the Empire.

If it is impracticable at present to adopt a special policy of compulsory service toward alien enemies, it is obvious that there would be even greater difficulty in discriminating against other aliens in Canada, in risk of their employment in industry, and the Government under existing circumstances deems it unwise to embark upon such a policy.

The imperative and pressing needs of the country urgently demand that there shall be no idlers in Canada during the remainder of the war. Holy Writ declares that if a man will not work neither shall he eat. Those who deliberately and wantonly obstruct the national purpose by subordinating everything to indolent self-enjoyment and selfish indulgence may confidently anticipate that the authority vested in the Government and Parliament will be used for compelling them to take the part which every true citizen should freely and voluntarily fulfil.

But the exercise of such power must be of general application.